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TEACHING HARLEM STUDENTS IN A COLLEGE READINESS WORKSHOP.

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THE COLLEGE READINESS WORKSHOP, SPONSORED AND SUPPORTED BY UNION SETTLEMENT, HARLEM, NEW YORK, IN 1964 AND 1965 SERVED 76 NEGRO AND PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS WHO HAD COMPLETED THE JUNIOR YEAR OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN OR COMMERCE HIGH SCHOOLS. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO PROVIDE "ACADEMIC REENFORCEMENT" AND "RIGOROUS TRAINING IN ACADEMIC SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES" FOR STUDENTS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE HAD LITTLE CHANCE OF ENTERING OR REMAINING IN COLLEGE. BOTH 5-WEEK SUMMER SESSIONS WERE HELD MORNINGS IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S EARL HALL AND WERE STAFFED BY FIVE FULL-TIME TEACHERS AIDED BY VOLUNTEER COLLEGE STUDENTS. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, MOST OF WHOM WERE RANKED ABOVE AVERAGE AND HAD BEEN IN "HONORS" CLASSES, PAID $20 ENTRANCE-FEES AS GESTURES OF COMMITMENT. EACH STUDENT RECEIVED A NOTEBOOK, A DAILY COPY OF THE "NEW YORK TIMES," AND ABOUT 15 PAPERBACK BOOKS AS STUDY MATERIALS. TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE AND HISTORY AFTER 1920 WERE CORRELATED THEMATICALLY AND CHRONOLOGICALLY, AND, WITH COMPOSITION, COMPRISED THE CORE OF THE CURRICULUM. SKILLS IN NOTE-TAKING AND DISCUSSION WERE ALSO TAUGHT. MARKED IMPROVEMENT WAS RECOGNIZED IN THE STUDENTS' COMPETENCIES IN COMPOSITION AND LITERARY INTERPRETATION AS A RESULT OF THEIR WORKSHOP EXPERIENCES. MOREOVER, EXTENSIVE ACTIVITY BY THE FACULTY IN WRITING REFERENCE LETTERS ASSISTED THE STUDENTS IN GAINING COLLEGE ADMISSION. (THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE NEW JERSEY ENGLISH LEAFLET," VOL. 28 (WINTER 1967), 1-9.) (RD)

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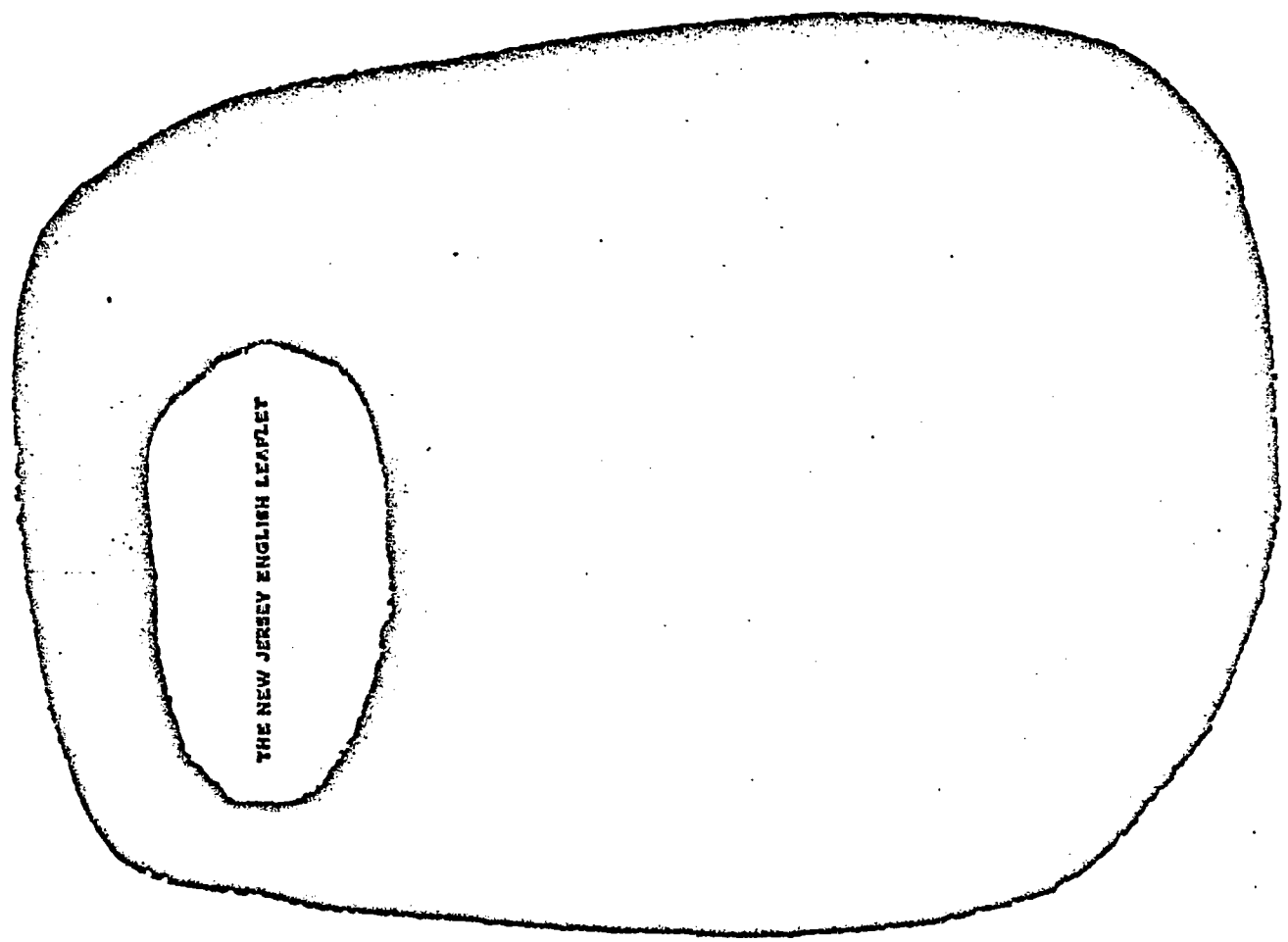

THE NEW JERSEY ENGLISH LEAFLET

Teaching Harlem Students in a College Readiness Workshop

ANNE BARLOW SHEPHERD

In the winter Mrs. Shepherd teaches English at the Princeton Day School, a co-educational school incorporating the former Miss Fine's School with which she was long associated. She also gives an adult education course in "English for the Foreign-born."

"All my life my family and teachers have been telling me to do something I used to think I never could do, but this morning, after meeting our faculty and hearing about the courses, I walked out of Earl Hall with *my head high.*" So wrote a student of mine, a sixteen-year-old Negro girl, on June 29, 1964, after her first day in a new enterprise called the "College Readiness Workshop," which was held on the campus of Columbia University. Her last three words will always evoke for me my first summer with Harlem students, for long and hot and riot-beset as it was, the pride and enthusiasm we all felt never dimmed.

The pride we, the teachers, felt after that first session was largely compounded of faith and hope; but now it derives from a sense of solid, demonstrable accomplishment. For almost all the students of that first group were accepted in college with full scholarships and are holding their own on campuses throughout the country; and almost none of them had any idea that college was even a possibility when we first met them.

The College Readiness Workshop, now two summers old, was designed for students who had finished their junior year at the Benjamin Franklin High School, which is on 116th Street in East Harlem. Thirty-four students registered for the course the first year, about half Negro, half Puerto Rican, half boys, half girls. The second year we had forty-two students, seven of whom were from Commerce High School in West 72nd Street, but who live in Harlem and petitioned to join our classes. Most of these boys and girls had already been identified by their high school as above average mentally and had been in "honors" sections of their classes. Each pupil was required to pay a registration fee of $20, which, of course, they had to earn themselves. (In some cases the fee was reduced or waived.) This, I feel, is a wise requirement. From the beginning each student had a personal stake in the enterprise, had made a definite gesture of commitment.

The "school" is sponsored by and supported by Union Settlement, which throughout the year works closely with Benjamin Franklin High School. The program was planned and implemented by Mrs. William Kirk,

whose husband is director of the settlement house. For many years Mrs. Kirk has been involved with the problems of college admissions which Benjamin Franklin students, working closely with the school's administrative staff, particularly Mr. Nathan Goldberg, a guidance counselor who is also the school's track coach. Mr. Goldberg believed that the pupils he counseled would have a better chance of getting into and staying in college if they had some kind of academic reinforcement, and some rigorous training in academic skills and techniques. After consulting with teachers and counselors, Mrs. Kirk decided that the academic disciplines which needed most enrichment and stimulus were English and history; she thereupon recruited five full-time teachers, from both public and private high schools.

The first summer we were fortunate in having as academic director, Henry Drewry, a distinguished Negro, who is one of the best history teachers in the country, and who has received national honors; the second summer Mr. Drewry was too busy teaching teachers how to teach, at an NDEA Institute at Princeton University. Both years we were enormously aided by a volunteer corps of young men and women who were taking courses at Teachers' College or Columbia and who were willing to join us for the last hour of the morning, the conference period, and work individually with students. As an English teacher, I have always thought such individual conferences absolutely indispensable, and it was gratifying to see the impressive gains made by our Harlem students under this system. None of them had ever had a teacher discuss a composition with them, and very often, I think, the mere fact, implicit in each interview, of a teacher's interest and concern, was as valuable as the specific instruction given. Several of our young instructors were so deeply interested in their students that they offered to continue their tutoring through the next school year, if they were within reach of Harlem.

Columbia University very generously allowed us the use of Earl Hall, the Department of Religion's building, every morning from 8 a.m. until 12:30. None of Earl Hall's high-ceilinged, cool, spacious rooms in the least resembled a school classroom, nor did the lobby or any of the smaller conference rooms. The students were very proud of this building and headed all their papers, and inscribed in all their books, "Earl Hall."

The fact that they could make such inscriptions in the books they were issued, that, in short, the impressive pile of crisp new paperbacks at each student's place the first day was his to *keep* was a nine days' wonder. Every pile contained a large Columbia notebook, a dictionary, a thesaurus and an atlas, in addition to specific texts, numbering about fifteen in all. Each morning every student received a copy of the *New York Times*, which was a wholly new experience for them, familiar with tabloids only. We began the day's program, after roll call, with a brief discussion of the leading articles and editorials; then, in subsequent history and English classes, we would use the paper in other ways. One day in a class of mine, when we were working on stronger organization in expository prose, I dictated a list of useful transitional words and phrases. The next day I airily turned to the editorial page of the *Times* and there, thanks to Messrs.

Reston, Baker and Oates, were almost all of the devices on my list. One of the boys gave me a very curious look, and I am sure suspected some kind of mysterious collusion. Another morning, before school started, I noticed two Puerto Rican boys with their heads together over a back page. Wondering what sports event particularly interested them, I peered over a shoulder and found them deep in a chess problem.

The other paperbacks the students received differed somewhat in the two years, but there *were* titles in common, including (for history) Ebenstein's *Totalitarianism*, Kennan's *American Diplomacy*, Hofstadter's *American History* and a documentary American history. For English they had anthologies of essays, short stories and poetry, which offered plenty of variety and flexibility and also gave them opportunity to read more than the assigned work if they had time. The faculty had decided on a syllabus, after consultation with the principal and guidance counselors of Benjamin Franklin High School, who felt that twentieth century history was the area of greatest weakness. Since the time was limited to five weeks, we planned a course to begin with the twenties and "cover" a decade a week, with the literature correlating with the history, both chronologically and thematically.

We discovered, after the first day or so, that composition was the greatest problem, and so they wrote for either history or English every night, and usually at least a paragraph in class during the day. We tried to help them develop other important techniques, especially note-taking, both from reading and lectures. From time to time the faculty delivered formal, carefully structured lectures and the students' notes were then corrected with painstaking care. Notable improvement was made in this technique. All of the written work was kept in individual folders, and the teachers tried to keep abreast of their pupils' writing.

Many of the students had difficulty with composition, not merely because of weakness in grammar, structure and punctuation, but also because they were linguistically handicapped: the Puerto Ricans because Spanish was still spoken at home, the Negroes (many of them) because nothing was spoken at home. Most of them realized their verbal inadequacy and struggled valiantly against it. But for such students verbal scores on aptitude tests are not an index of mental capacity. I remember the astonishment and awe I felt when I first realized that Willy J., the most inarticulate speaker and incoherent writer I ever taught, had a mind of extraordinary originality and force. He never gave a "dusty" answer or uttered a second-hand opinion; he possessed amazing human insight. Yet all his teachers wondered how in the world Willy could gain enough verbal power to make college in a year. But if he did not, he would almost inevitably sink into the ranks of unskilled labor and be engulfed in total darkness. Willy also has a most engaging personality and a noble character, so a good many people have helped him. He was given extra tutoring after school all last year by one of our teachers, who is herself a fine poet. He got a job last summer with the Post Office, and his hours were arranged so that he was able to come to our workshop a second summer and do special work in English. Mrs. Kirk also helped him solve his personal problems, for Willy had no home and no family, except a married brother

who threw him out the day he graduated from high school. Willy is now a freshman in a good mid-Western college.

If improving the students' skills in composition was our major academic goal, developing their ability to participate in class discussion was a close second. In all informal situations, before school and during recess when we had refreshments out on the wide front steps, these young people were totally at ease with us, talking and laughing as if they had known us all their lives. Even on the opening day, when I had expected to find a good deal of awkwardness and perhaps strain, the high school group had been warm, outgoing, relaxed. (I abhor generalizations about sexes, nationalities or races, but it is indubitably true that Negroes in general are endowed with great social grace.) However, in the classroom situation it was a different matter. I finally gathered, from private conversations and from Mr. Goldberg, that these students, trained in Harlem schools with severe discipline problems, had been held to the strictest procedures: the teacher "calls on" a pupil, asks a factual question, he replies as briefly as possible, and then "shuts up." "You either have it this way or all hell breaks loose . . ." Sometimes a very brave, very confident young polemicist might take the floor and deliver a speech, but this is far from the kind of dialogue I wanted to spark. Of course, the large classes they were used to had been another obstacle, but here we were in seminar groups around tables seating no more than ten, and still they did not talk. The first few days the first summer brought me near desperation, and I restorted to the familiar ploy of playing devil's advocate and making perfectly outrageous statements about the literary work under examination. The class looked bemused or horrified, but made no response. But the beginning of the second week saw a break-through. We had read Hemingway's story, "Soldier's Home," and one of the girls had volunteered to tell us "what was wrong with Krebs." She gave a long analysis based on some sections of my lecture on the twenties, and on some Hemingway criticism she had read. It was very impressive and totally irrelevant. The class sat, impassive as usual, all but one boy, a tall, handsome track star, who showed signs of suffering. He began to writhe in his chair, and mutter and groan, and finally he burst out, "I don't think that's it at all. That guy wasn't disillusioned about the war and all that stuff. He was just *bored as hell with his home!*" The ice cracked, and from then on more students participated in discussion and responded to literature more and more articulately.

Their interpretation of literature improved amazingly, I thought, and this was true both summers. I had always believed that depth of comprehension, awareness, insight, developed slowly in the high school years, but these students seemed to make dramatically sudden gains. It is part of the current jargon of English teachers to speak of the two factors in reading comprehension: the "LS and the EM," literary sophistication and emotional maturity. Now, if our Harlem people were weak in the first area, they were certainly strong in the second, and three of the main themes of modern literature—alienation, isolation and search for identity—are aspects of life they have known since birth. Many of their perspicuous remarks I shall long remember. One deserves quoting, because it was a gentle statement with a devastating implication of the differences between

their Harlem ghetto and the total ambience of my WASP world. Carmen, a small Puerto Rican girl had previously made little contribution to class conversation, but one day we were reading Robinson's poetry, and after a few compassionate comments by two boys, about lonely old age, following my reading of "Mr. Flood's Party," I remarked that I personally had always been touched by the lines,

> Then as a mother lays her sleeping child
> Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,
> He set the jug down slowly at his feet,
> With trembling care, knowing that most things break.

Carmen raised her hand. "But, Mrs. Shepherd, don't you feel that Robinson was thinking about more people than just old Mr. Flood when he said that? You know—most of *us* have to learn very early—when we are very young—that most things break."

Reading poetry with these Harlem students was, for the most part, a satisfying teaching experience, for, although they suffered a little from never having been taught anything about the art of poetry, at least they had not been badly taught. Therefore they came to it with a freshness, spontaneity and intensity that were inspiring. Often their reactions were stronger than their verbal capacity to express their feelings. I remember how one boy, after I had read aloud Henry Reed's "Naming of Parts" (giving the sergeant's lines a really strident rasp), leaped to his feet and began pacing up and down, stammering, "I didn't know a poem could be like that. I mean I didn't know it could BE like THAT!"

Comparing the English classes of the two summers, I think, on the whole, that poetry produced the best talk the first summer, but the second year it was definitely Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience" and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* which generated the most exciting discussions. These discussions also gave me abundant evidence for a conviction that had been growing in me since the first day, namely that this second group of students included a handful of remarkable young men, with the marks of future leadership already clear upon them, who already felt a grave sense of commitment to their Harlem world, and whose avowed purpose it was to train themselves to be of greater service to Harlem. When these boys talked about Thoreau and Baldwin, they were not merely articulate, they were eloquent. They went all the way with Thoreau on non-violence—"If we behave as badly as the whites our cause is lost"—but then they endorsed every syllable of Baldwin's great indictment.

Two of the boys are already active, in an almost professional way, in welfare work among their people. Preston W. has been a "lay preacher" in his church since he was fourteen years old and seems to be active in every possible phase of the work of the East Bethel Baptist Church. Preston was one of our finest students, with an impressive reading background (he was wonderful on Dostoevski), and at my final conference with him last August I was suggesting that he could reasonably think of applying to some highly selective colleges if he wanted to, mentioning Harvard, Yale, Williams. He smiled modestly, and replied, "This may seem strange to you, and probably sounds presumptuous, but I don't want to go away from New York. I can't leave some of the families who depend on me. So I'd

like to try for Columbia." I told him I understood and admired his point of view, and would do all in my power to support his application.

The second young man who, like Preston, was already "professionally" active, was Ronald W., whom I shall introduce a little later, but I want now to emphasize the fact that a group of six boys, with a similar sense of commitment to their people, were largely responsible for setting the tone of last summer's classes, in great contrast to the mood of the 1964 students, who, during that riot-ridden July were bitter in their denunciation of their ghetto, powerful in their defense of violence. It is one of the interesting paradoxes of history, I feel, that it was *because* of the violence of the first summer that the peace of the second was possible; and although it is beyond the scope of this article to explore the subject, I have considerable evidence that New York's much maligned Poverty Program and HARYOU were largely responsible. For one thing, almost none of our boys was able to find part-time jobs in '64, and almost all of them had work in '65. The difference in the emotional climate of the two summer sessions will always be symbolized for me by two student compositions, although they were far from the best writing. This excerpt is from an essay by a Negro girl, July 21, 1964:

. . . I am tired of living in Harlem. I am tired of paying more for food that is of poor quality. The food in Harlem is disgusting. The fruits are unripe, vegetables rotten, meat indescribable. Food is higher here than anywhere else in New York City. I am tired of living in the slums where roaches are numerous, rats are plentiful. I am tired of no heat in the winter, no air conditioning in the summer. I am tired of seeing police take graft, play numbers and stand on street corners, indifferent to the Negroes in the neighborhood. I am tired of the unsolved muggings and robberies. I am disgusted by the prostitutes who freely walk the streets and solicit business. I am sick of all the dirty children roaming the streets. I am disgusted at the school dropouts, who lie on stoops all day and yell obscenities at passersby. Finally, I am sick of countless committees who come to Harlem, and reports and more reports.

I am sick of my fat, greedy white landlord because he doesn't give a damn about the conditions of the building we live in . . . I am sick of all the organizations in Harlem. Each one is against the others. Won't they ever stop bickering and help the community?

I am sick of my so-called leaders . . . The Urban League is made up of the Negro middle class. These are the people who move from Harlem as soon as they get the money. . . . Mr. Powell only comes to Harlem when he has to. . . . Oh, yes, there are others who supposedly speak for the poor, underprivileged Negro, but are only trying to make a name for themselves. Humanitarians they are called, aren't they? . . .

My 1965 prototype is from an autobiographical essay by Ronald W. whom I mentioned before, already an outstanding leader among his peers:

One day as I walked down a certain block in Harlem, I in a sense turned my nose up at the drug addicts enhanced by morphine, cocaine or marijuana, at the connoisseurs of cheap wine, at the women who are the "street walkers" every hour of the day and night. To those who spoke improper English, to those whose dress was inferior to mine, to the checker-playing garment workers—I gave them all a scornful look. To the squalid children coming out of squalid tenements . . . I showed no remorse.

But then I began to think, right there, why was I any better? What or who gave me the right to look down on these people, my own people. Then I felt that somewhere, at this precise moment, someone might be looking down at these people, not excluding me. I looked at myself through a car mirror to see the difference. Externally I was just as dark, wooly-

haired an as much in trouble as they were. . . . From that moment on I started my civic obligations. I first destroyed my false values. As I walked home I spoke to everyone I saw who was not engaged in converstation, and as a reward I was given a kind-faced answer in all cases. . . . From then on I never turned up my nose at anyone. I joined HARYOU in February, 1963, where I served in many capacities. I met the hard-faced street youth and the college youth. I became involved with Community Action, telling people of the new program. I talked with parents at trying times of the day and night, and also with very old people. I felt very happy with myself, for I was now able to communicate with my people and others of the so-called minority groups.

My first job was teaching African history to a group of very young children in a center. I came to love them dearly, the same squalid children I had so disliked. I found myself making visits to the children's homes and talking with their guardians. Their guardians felt quite secure, knowing their child was in "the hands of a reliable young man" as one parent put it. I did not mind walking up broken stairs, stepping over debris and entering an apartment with just as many rats and roaches as children. I sometimes stay in these apartments for long periods of time, baby-sitting, tutoring, or just helping clean up. People began to know me by name and to trust me. I felt I did more than the average social worker. As the months went on, I still helped my people and at the same time I was moving up in the program. I was a district co-ordinator for another part of Harlem, but I still contacted my friends in the old area. . . .

And then came the experience I shall never forget as long as I am to remember. It was my appointment as a Board Member to the Board of Directors of HARYOU. I was the youngest (and still am) member of the Board.

. . . I feel I have really helped my community and shall continue to do so. I intend to go to college and study law. I would like to become a lawyer and then later go into the political arena . . . So,—"Color me Progressive."
The last three words were the title of his essay.

The ghetto consciousness, the feeling that Harlem is their prison, which both essays reflect, we, their teachers, tried to combat in every way possible; and many generous New Yorkers and New York organizations helped us. Blocks of tickets for concerts and plays were given us both summers. Richard Rodgers himself gave us tickets for *The King and I*, even at a time when tickets were at a premium. The management of the Philharmonic gave us fifty seats last July to a Berlioz concert. Of course, we all went, faculty and students, and I never saw so many rapt faces. The Huntington Hartford Gallery gave us tickets to the remarkable exhibit of painting, sculpture and photography of the twenties. One of the museum guards told me he had never seen a student group so polite and so interested. Many outside lecturers came to Earl Hall, including the poet Paul Engle, the *New York Times* White House correspondent, Robert Semple, Jr., the actress Mildred Dunnock, who played the original Linda in *Death of a Salesman*, which we read both summers. We told the students of all the marvelous free entertainment New York offers, and I urged my classes to ride the subway all the way down to the Battery, "and you can still 'ride back and forth all night on the ferry,'" said I, too glibly quoting V.C.'s most famous poet. One of my colleagues, overhearing my remark, predicted that I would have all the Puerto Rican mothers on the doorstep next morning, but I didn't.

And so we come to the overriding question, the test of the whole program: did those students from that first class make college? Yes, they did. Thirty-two of the original thirty-four applied and were accepted, some by several colleges. Of the two remaining, one, a boy, had to support his entire family; the other, a girl, decided to wait a year, but is applying in '66. Not only did these students win acceptance, but they also had to win scholarships. They also needed money for transportation and other expenses, and this Mrs. Kirk miraculously obtained for them through special gifts from generous New Yorkers.

Previous graduates of Benjamin Franklin have occasionally made college, but no such group as this has ever been admitted, nor have so many distant institutions been involved. Almost all BFHS graduates have gone to city colleges. Our list, too long to give in its entirety, includes: Harvard, Williams, Brown, Middlebury, Wesleyan, Mt. Holyoke, Wells, Bryn Mawr, Chatham, Western, Beloit, Grinnell and the Universities of Buffalo, Rochester, Denver.

Our faculty had a significant role in application procedures, for at the end of the course, both summers, we wrote long, careful evaluations of each student, analyzing their character, personality, academic aptitude, and giving suggestions for specific colleges, when we could. These statements were used by the high school guidance officers. Then, too, we were frequently asked by Mrs. Kirk, during the winter and early spring, to write letters to specific deans of admission, on our own school letterheads, presenting corroborating evidence of a student's ability. For the great hurdle to be surmounted, and the obstacle which understandably dismayed most admission boards, was the appallingly low verbal score on the SAT, that score which most colleges have now proved is their most reliable indicator of academic achievement in college. The Educational Testing Bureau is aware of this problem and its experts are trying to develop a special test for the "culturally disadvantaged" (horrible new jargon), but thus far they have no such test; and so, hoping our reputations with certain admission boards as dependable "recommenders" would help our Harlem people, we wrote many testimonials. Last winter, in a conversation about our program with Miss Mitchell, head of the Brearley School in New York, she remarked that my recommendations were probably of more value to my students than my teaching—an idea I at first found disconcerting, but which may be true.

Our personal recommendations may have helped convince admission boards to accept the students, but I hope our *teaching* is helping them to stay in college. We were able to meet and talk to most of our college freshmen at the reunion dinner-dance held during Christmas vacation at Union Settlement. Almost all of them seemed to be holding their own, academically, although a few were in difficulties in some particular course. This, I feel, was to be expected. The report which sent my spirits soaring, however, was from our Bryn Mawr girl. We had gone to great lengths last spring to convince Bryn Mawr's admission board that this applicant's verbal score of 450 was not valid, and I had written in strong terms that I thought Pearl would do well in college; so it was with considerable relief that I learned that her average in freshman English at Bryn Mawr was A—.

The atmosphere of that Christmas party was, in the words of a professional journalist who had come there (with clip-board) to describe it, "indescribable." "This is the gayest, happiest group in New York City," she kept saying. They were all full of exictement, dying to tell us about their new campuses, their courses, their friends. "Man, the West is really friendly—but it took me two months to believe it" (Univ. of Denver). "My campus is so beautiful I can't bear to go indoors." (This was said by everyone, whether their campuses were *really* beautiful or not.) The journalist kept murmuring, "But how do you all know each other so well if you were together only five weeks?" I told her time had nothing to do with it, a remark she apparently found less than illuminating.

Summer courses for boys and girls who have been deprived of educational advantages are now proliferating, and each summer sees a heartening increase. They are of many types and have varied objectives; all are necessary and comparisons are pointless. Dartmouth and Mt. Holyoke are great examples of the ABC program for pre-college students. Yale and Princeton, supported by great foundations, have had institutes for about forty boys with academic potential but poor motivation. A report entitled "And Gladly Learn," issued by the National Association of Independent Schools, describes forty-five programs sponsored by private schools throughout the country. Another inspiring development I have observed in the last two years is the new sense of responsibility felt by certain college administrations toward the "culturally disadvantaged" students whom they are accepting. They do not lower their standards; that would be disastrous. But they do give special guidance to the Negroes, and often special language help to the Puerto Ricans.

The chief accent last summer, it seemed to me, was on helping the illiterate Negro children, or the about-to-be illerates, for whom the Head Start programs were designed. There is no nobler purpose. But I hope college, at which I had been asked to describe our workshop. I was followed rhetorical device and give a list of "I am tired's." I am tired of being told at conferences that our work is "too easy," that we are dealing with students of high IQ's with high motivation. (Only a few have high IQ's and still fewer are really motivated.) I am tired of being told our budget is too modest for foundations to consider. (We need only a few thousand a year, and "it costs $15,000 merely to evaluate a program.") I am tired of being told that without at least three years of special courses in the Negro sub-culture one cannot even communicate with Harlem youth. (Last year I was a member of a panel at a vocational conference at a girls' college, at which I had been asked to describe our workshop. I was followed by a woman who holds a high office in VISTA, and she told our audience that the preceding speaker, I, merely imagined that she had been communicating with her students. It was quite impossible without a Ph.D. in sociology of the sub-cultures.)

About half-way through dinner at that Christmas party I mentioned, Ronald made a late entrance. Before he took his seat, he made the rounds of the tables, greeting each of his teachers. When he found me, he shook hands, kissed me on the cheek, said something gay, graceful and gallant, and swept on. The lady journalist, who was sitting opposite me, looked more confused than ever. "You see," I said, "our main problem is communication."